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News Release

*For Immediate Release*

### **Traffic Stop Data Review**

Springfield Police Chief Paul Williams has followed through on a promise to the community to release results from third party researcher's look into 2010 police traffic stop data.

Missouri State University Professor of Sociology and Anthropology Dr. Mike Stout, presented his final report, "2010 Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Traffic Stops and Stop Outcomes: Springfield, Missouri" (pdf) to representatives from NAACP, Springfield Police Department (SPD) and City Manager Greg Burris.

Dr. Stout analyzed 2010 traffic stop data, in conjunction with demographic data available from the 2010 Census, in order to provide the third-party unbiased report.

"The results summarized in this report reveal significant racial disparities in traffic stops, searches, arrests, and contraband hit rates in the city of Springfield," Stout said. "The results also show that while the socioeconomic and racial characteristics of census tracts account for some of the disparities, a significant proportion of the disparities remain unexplained."

Stout said future studies should attempt to account for other factors that may influence racial disparities in traffic stops.

"While some people may be tempted to cite the results summarized in this report as evidence that Springfield has a problem with racial profiling, we must all keep in mind that there is currently not enough data available to be able to definitively determine the cause of the disparities."

The SPD committed and followed through in making several changes during the past year in an effort to enhance the ongoing dialogue with the community regarding this issue.

Those areas included: the installation of cameras in all gang unit vehicles, beat cars and take home cars; conducting an annual review of search and seizure policies and procedures in respect to all applicable state and case laws; the utilization of the Niche software program in which supervisors and commanders can use the reporting ability of the program to provide an ongoing review for racial disparity.

NAACP representative Francine Pratt said, "I appreciate the continued effort from Chief Williams to keep his word to engage in further analysis of data to identify and address disparities. The commitment to use a third-party researcher enables Springfieldians to know that a fair and consistent approach has been and will continued to be used throughout this process. It is important to identify justifiable disparities in order to identify the opportunities for improvement to bring greater awareness and education to the public and the police department."

The SPD is committed to working with the minority community, including the NAACP, to continue this dialogue in order to determine the cause(s) of the disparities cited and work to develop a strategy to close the gap.

Chief Williams and Mrs. Pratt both noted that these efforts must focus on training, education, and awareness for police officers and citizens alike.

The SPD has long prohibited the use of race as the sole factor in conducting traffic stops, a practice termed as racial profiling.

“Springfield police officers shall never choose to conduct a traffic stop or other enforcement contact based solely on the racial, gender, or socioeconomic characteristics of the driver or subject. Use of racial profiling or enforcement techniques is prohibited. Officers may use behavioral or vehicle descriptors as elements in a profile but the use of ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status of the occupant/subjects are forbidden and will not be tolerated.”

- SPD Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) 103.1, Code of Conduct, Section 4.5.1

“The information officers provide related to each and every traffic stop is vital in our efforts to not only comply with the law but to remain within our own policy,” Chief Williams explained.

“We have undertaken a proactive approach of utilizing all the available data and researching it further to educate officers and the public as to what it might mean. I appreciate the work that Dr. Stout has done and as we anticipate the upcoming release of the 2011 traffic stop data by the Attorney General, I am committed to moving forward and conducting similar reviews on an annual basis.”

The report mentions that some possible factors that contribute to the race/ethnic disparities in stops might be the crime rates of the tracts where the stops occurred, poverty rates within the tract, number and frequency of patrols in the tracts, whether the stop occurred in an area with high levels of gang activity, and the racial characteristics of drivers.

“These and other potential factors may be areas of focus in future reports,” the Chief said.

Download a [copy of Dr. Stout’s complete report](#) (pdf).

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